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# Moscow Says U.S. Soldier Has Defected

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Los Angeles Times

**MOSCOW, April 2—An American soldier who was stationed in West Germany has defected to the Soviet Union, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said here today.**

The soldier, identified only as William E. Roberts, and his West German wife feared persecution for their political views, spokesman Gennadi Gerasimov said, adding that Roberts "already had been persecuted in the U.S. Army." If correct, the reported defection would be the first by a U.S. serviceman to the Soviet Union since the Vietnam War.

Gerasimov provided no rank or Army unit for Roberts, nor did he

say when Roberts and his wife, identified only as P. Neumann, arrived in the Soviet Union. He did say that the couple has left for a honeymoon in the Soviet republic of Turkmenia.

A spokesman for the U.S. Embassy said he had no information about the case except what was provided by the Soviet Foreign Ministry. He contended, however, that the term "political asylum" was a misnomer since U.S. citizens are free to travel to almost any country that will accept them.

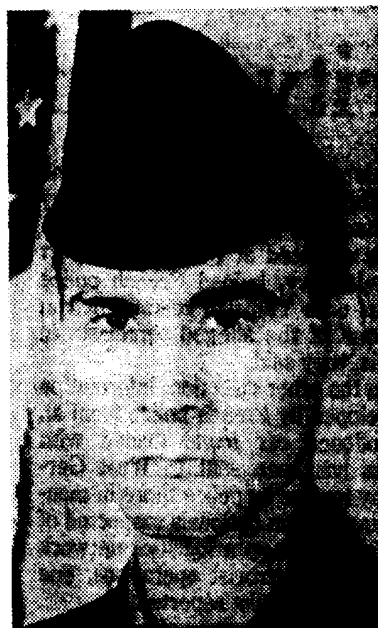
In Washington, the U.S. Army announced that it had declared a deserter one of its soldiers assigned to West Germany, Pvt. 2 Wade Evan Roberts. The Army noted that Roberts' first name differed from that released by Moscow.

Roberts was assigned to the 42nd Field Artillery Brigade in Geissen, West Germany, and was listed as having been absent without leave since March 2.

The Army added that Roberts was 22, and said military records showed him to be single and from San Bernardino, Calif.

The Pentagon and Army stressed, however, that they were still investigating Roberts' disappearance and "at this time, we are unable to establish whether or not this is the individual referred to in that [Soviet] announcement."

The incident was the second publicized case within the last six



**WADE EVANS ROBERTS**  
... deserted, may have defected

months of an American choosing to live in the Soviet Union.

Arnold Lockshin, a former medical technician from Houston, applied to live in the Soviet Union with his family last October after saying he had been persecuted in the United States because of his opposition to U.S. defense policy. Lockshin later appeared via satellite on a U.S. television program hosted by Phil Donahue to defend his decision to leave the United States. The program also was shown on state-run Soviet television.

In another celebrated case, former CIA employe Edward Lee Howard showed up in Moscow after he was indicted on spying charges in the United States.